Dreamtime Stories:

The majority of stories were taken from: http://www.artistwd.com/joyzine/australia/dreaming.

In the animist framework of Australian Aboriginal mythology, The Dreaming is a sacred era in which ancestral Totemic Spirit Beings formed The Creation.

"Dreaming" is also often used to refer to an individual's or group's set of beliefs or spirituality. For instance, an indigenous Australian might say that he or she has Kangaroo Dreaming, or Shark Dreaming, or Honey Ant Dreaming, or any combination of Dreamings pertinent to their "country". Many Indigenous Australians also refer to the Creation time as "The Dreaming". The Dreamtime laid down the patterns of life for the Aboriginal people.

Dreaming stories vary throughout Australia, with variations on the same theme. For example, the story of how the birds got their colors is different in New South Wales and in Western Australia. Stories cover many themes and topics, as there are stories about creation of sacred places, land, people, animals and plants, law and custom. It is a complex network of knowledge, faith, and practices that derive from stories of creation. It pervades and informs all spiritual and physical aspects of an indigenous Australian's life.

The Dreaming establishes the structures of society, rules for social behavior, and the ceremonies performed to ensure continuity of life and land. The Dreaming governs the laws of community, cultural lore and how people are required to behave in their communities. The condition that is The Dreaming is met when people live according to law, and live the lore: perpetuating initiations and Dreaming transmissions or lineages, singing the songs, dancing the dances, telling the stories, painting the songlines and Dreamings.

The Creation was believed to be the work of culture heroes who travelled across a formless land, creating sacred sites and significant places of interest in their travels. In this way songlines were established, some of which could travel right across Australia, through as many as six to ten different language groupings. The songs and dances of a particular songline were kept alive and frequently performed at large gatherings, organised in good seasons.

In the Aboriginal world view, every event leaves a record in the land. Everything in the natural world is a result of the actions of the archetypal beings, whose actions created the world. Whilst Europeans consider these cultural ancestors to be mythical, many Aboriginal people believe in their literal existence. The meaning and significance of particular places and creatures is wedded to their origin in the Dreaming, and certain places have a particular potency, which the Aborigines call its dreaming.

Selected abstracts relating Dreamtime to ecology:

Susan Barrett, « **“This land is me”: Indigenous Australian story-telling and ecological knowledge** », *ELOHI*, 3 | 2013, 29-40.

A song in the film *One Night the Moon* (Rachel Perkins, 2001), summarises the differences between the white Australian and the Indigenous Australian relationship to the land. White Australians see the land as something to be exploited for monetary gain (“This land is mine”) while Indigenous Australians see themselves as an extension of the land (“This land is me”). This paper focuses on Alexis Wright’s novel *Carpentaria* (2006) whose structure is inspired by the traditional Indigenous

Australian *Dreaming* stories. These stories were a way of handing down knowledge about the environment from one generation to the next and *Carpentaria* has a similar educational aim. By destabilising what White Australians think they know about Indigenous Australian culture and the Australian environment, the novel shows that Aboriginal mythology has both a political and an ecological relevance in today's society.

Jackson, S. E., M. M. Douglas, M. J. Kennard, B. J. Pusey, J. Huddleston, B. Harney, L. Liddy, M. Liddy, R. Liddy, L. Sullivan, B. Huddleston, M. Banderson, A. McMah, and Q. Allsop. 2014. **"We like to listen to stories about fish": integrating indigenous ecological and scientific knowledge to inform environmental flow assessments.** *Ecology and Society* **19**(1): 43.

Studies that apply indigenous ecological knowledge to contemporary resource management problems are increasing globally; however, few of these studies have contributed to environmental water management. We interviewed three indigenous landowning groups in a tropical Australian catchment subject to increasing water resource development pressure and trialled tools to integrate indigenous and scientific knowledge of the biology and ecology of freshwater fish to assess their water requirements. The differences, similarities, and complementarities between the knowledge of fish held by indigenous people and scientists are discussed in the context of the changing socioeconomic circumstances experienced by indigenous communities of north Australia. In addition to eliciting indigenous knowledge that confirmed field fish survey results, the approach generated knowledge that was new to both science and indigenous participants, respectively. Indigenous knowledge influenced (1) the conceptual models developed by scientists to understand the flow ecology and (2) the structure of risk assessment tools designed to understand the vulnerability of particular fish to low-flow scenarios.

Prober, S. M., M. H. O'Connor, and F. J. Walsh. 2011. **Australian Aboriginal peoples' seasonal knowledge: a potential basis for shared understanding in environmental management.** *Ecology and Society* **16**(2): 12.

Natural resource scientists and managers increasingly recognize traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) for its potential contribution to contemporary natural resource management (NRM) and, through this, to more resilient social-ecological systems. In practice, however, inadequate cross-cultural means to organize and communicate TEK can limit its effective inclusion in management decisions. Indigenous seasonal knowledge involving temporal knowledge of biota, landscapes, weather, seasonal cycles, and their links with culture and land uses is one type of TEK relevant to this issue. We reviewed the literature on Australian Aboriginal seasonal knowledge to characterize contemporary and potential applications to NRM. This knowledge was often documented through cross-cultural collaboration in the form of ecological calendars. Our analysis revealed a variety of basic and applied environmental information in Aboriginal seasonal descriptions and calendars that can contribute directly to NRM. Documented applications have been limited to date, but include fire management, inclusion as general material in NRM plans, and interpretative information about environments. Emerging applications include water management and climate change monitoring. Importantly, seasonal knowledge can also contribute indirectly to NRM outcomes by providing an organizing framework for the recovery, retention, and cross-cultural communication of TEK and linking to its broader cultural and cosmological contexts. We conclude that by facilitating the combination of experiential with experimental knowledge and fostering complementarity of

different knowledge systems, Aboriginal seasonal knowledge can increasingly contribute to more resilient social-ecological outcomes in NRM. Nevertheless, the seasonal framework should augment, rather than override, other approaches to cross-cultural NRM such as those with spatial and/or social-ecological emphasis.

Research findings back up Aboriginal legend on origin of Central Australian palm trees

ABC news, 3 Apr 2015, http://www.abc.net.au

The scientific world is stunned by research which backs an Aboriginal legend about how palm trees got to Central Australia.

Several years ago Tasmanian ecologist David Bowman did DNA tests on palm seeds from the outback and near Darwin. The results led him to conclude the seeds were carried to the Central Desert by humans up to 30,000 years ago. Professor Bowman read an Aboriginal legend recorded in 1894 by pioneering German anthropologist and missionary Carl Strehlow, which was only recently translated, describing the "gods from the north" bringing the seeds to Palm Valley. Professor Bowman said he was amazed.

"We're talking about a verbal tradition which had been transmitted through generations possibly for over 7,000, possibly 30,000 years," he said.

"Just an amazing coincidence that we'd independently concluded that the seeds had been transported and then subsequently we discover an Aboriginal legend is exactly what we found scientifically.

"The concordance of the findings of a scientific study and an ancient myth is a striking example of how traditional ecological knowledge can inform and enhance scientific research.

"It suggests that Aboriginal oral traditions may have endured for up to 30,000 years, and lends further weight to the idea that some Aboriginal myths pertaining to gigantic animals may be authentic records of extinct megafauna."

The research has been published in the Nature magazine.

Autumn Floods:

The Zhuangzi is an ancient Chinese text from the late Warring States period (476–221 BC) which contains stories and anecdotes that exemplify the carefree nature of the ideal Daoist sage.

What do Daoists believe?

Dao: The heart of the very earliest Chinese vision of the cosmos is the Dao, the origin of all. Dao means 'the way'. The Dao is the origin of everything and the ultimate aim of all Daoists. The Dao is Heaven, Earth and Humanity. The Dao cannot be defined because it exists beyond all forms. In the words of the great Daoist sage, Lao Zi: 'That which can be named is not the true Dao'. The Dao teaches wu-wei, the way of no-action and no-selfishness. This means to live in a plain and modest way and not to struggle for material gain.

The value of life: Daoism regards life as the most valuable thing and pursues immortality. Life can be prolonged through meditation and exercise. People should train their will, discard selfishness, and seek to be a model of virtue. With high moral sense and good exercise, one can maintain energy throughout one's life. To achieve this, Daoism stresses the need for a peaceful and harmonious environment as a very important external condition.

Yin and Yang: The Tao, the essence of all, gives birth to Nature—the One—which in turn gives birth to Yin and Yang—the Two. Yin is female, moist, cold, the moon, autumn and winter, shadows and waters. Yang is male, dry, hot, the sun, spring and summer, brightness and earth. From the perpetual striving of Yin and Yang arises the Three—Heaven, Earth and Humanity. Humanity must try to balance the opposites of Heaven and Earth.

What does Daoism (Taoism) teach us about ecology?

1. Follow the Earth: The Dao De Jing says: 'Humanity follows the Earth, the Earth follows Heaven, Heaven follows the Dao, and the Dao follows what is natural.' Daoists therefore obey the Earth. The Earth respects Heaven, Heaven abides by the Dao, and the Dao follows the natural course of everything. Humans should help everything grow according to its own way. We should cultivate the way of no-action and let nature be itself.

2. Harmony with nature: In Daoism, everything is composed of two opposite forces known as Yin and Yang. The two forces are in constant struggle within everything. When they reach harmony, the energy of life is created. Someone who understands this point will not exploit nature, but will treat it well and learn from it. It is obvious that in the long run, the excessive use of nature will bring about disaster, even the extinction of humanity.

3. Too much success: If the pursuit of development runs counter to the harmony and balance of nature, even if it is of great immediate interest and profit, people should restrain themselves from it. Insatiable human desire will lead to the over-exploitation of natural resources. To be too successful is to be on the path to defeat.

4. Affluence in bio-diversity: Daoism has a unique sense of value in that it judges affluence by the number of different species. If all things in the universe grow well, then a society is a community of affluence. If not, this kingdom is on the decline. This view encourages both government and people to take good care of nature. This thought is a special contribution by Daoism to the conservation of nature.

Selected abstracts relating Daoism to ecology:

Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape edited by N. J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2001

From the introduction: Daoism and ecology are often invoked as natural partners in contemporary discussions of environmental issues in the West. When looking to the religious and intellectual resources provided by various "world religions," it has therefore been a commonplace assumption that the Chinese tradition conventionally known as "Daoism/Taoism" reveals an obvious and particularly compelling affinity with global ecological concerns. For most Western commentators until recently, Daoism primarily referred to the "mystical wisdom" found in several ancient "classical" texts (especially the *Daode jing* and *Zhuangzi*) and was seen to be fundamentally in tune with heightened contemporary fears about the increasingly fractured relations between humanity and the natural world. Popular testimony would even whimsically suggest that Pooh Bear and Piglet affirmed the profound ecological sensibility of the ancient Chinese Daoists.

Unfortunately there has been very little serious discussion of this beguiling equation of Daoism and ecology. Too much has been simply, and sometimes fantastically, taken for granted about what is finally quite elusive and problematic—both concerning the wonderfully 'mysterious' tradition known as Daoism and, in this case, the 'natural' confluence of Daoism and contemporary ecological concerns. Among the shelves of Western books and articles written in the past twenty-five years about the religious, ethical, and philosophical implications of a worldwide "environmental crisis," there have been many passing allusions to a kind of Daoist ecological wisdom (often associated with native American and other tribal-aboriginal perspectives, as well as with Poohish themes and the free-floating and universalized "Suzuki-Zen" of an earlier generation). However, there is still no single work that is grounded in a scholarly understanding of the real complexities of the Daoist tradition and is also devoted to a critical exploration of the tradition's potential for informing current ecological issues.

http://www.processphilosophy.org/daoism-and-ecology-eight-ideas-worth-considering.html

Eric S. Nelson, **REVIEW OF N.J. Girardot, James Miller, Liu Xiaogan, *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape* (Harvard University Press, 2001).** 478 Pages. DAO: A JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY, Volume II • Number 2 • Summer 2003 • ISSN: 1540-3009.

From the paper: One recent tragedy is the ecological degradation seen in cultures that are supposedly more ecologically insightful than the West. The skeptics in this volume thus always point to the ecological crisis in East Asia as an indication that Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism are ecologically helpless in the face of modernization. Whether it is communist China and North Korea or capitalist South Korea and Taiwan, there has been more ecological devastation in the last century than in the entire history of East Asian civilizations, which are famous for transforming nature through irrigation and the expansion of agricultural lands since antiquity. Yet it should give these critics pause that this has occurred under the loss of traditional environmental practices—in which respect for nature was enforced with religious sanctions—and the dominance of Western ideologies and patterns of competition. On the opposite interpretive extreme, one should also be wary of the appropriation of Non-Western religions and philosophies as raw material for raiding expeditions that mine texts and traditions for "resources," which are torn out of their context and adopted to other agendas without any respect for their otherness or their own independent character. Creative

interpretation is necessary, since this is how traditions are transmitted across cultures, but so is a responsive hermeneutics in intercultural understanding.

…

This volume is a valuable contribution to the literature on Daoism and ecology. It allows us to appreciate that the strength of Daoism for ecological and environmental thought and practice lies in its recognition of nature's power and fragility as well as our dependence and role in promoting or harming the self-organizing web of interconnected particularities. Daoism requires an understanding on our part of how we relate to nature from within nature itself. That is, it is a question of our attunement and accord with nature, a question of whether humans can save themselves from their own activities and practices by listening and yielding to something other than themselves to which they nevertheless fundamentally belong and are claimed. Daoism is in this sense both religious and naturalistic. As such, it is incompatible with many of the humanistic and modernist assumptions of contemporary environmentalism. Yet its meaning cannot be reduced to how useful it is for ecology. We are called not only to think and live ecologically but in accordance with the spontaneity of nature itself—to yield to nature in order to let it occur through us.